



IN REPLY REFER TO:

# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Grand Canyon National Park  
P.O. Box 129  
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023-0129

May 25, 2001

Dear Interested Party:

Reference: Grand Canyon National Park, Wildland Urban Interface Initiative EA

Subject: Comments on proposed projects (general scoping)

The National Park Service is seeking public input on Fire Management programs to be undertaken at Grand Canyon National Park. Prescribed fires, Wildland Fires for Resource Benefit and mechanical fuel reduction projects have been undertaken in the past. However, with implementation of the National Fire Plan, the National Park Service intends to enhance these programs to more effectively manage park resources. The following actions are intended:

- **Prescribed Fires** – this pre-planned management action is designed to use fire as a tool to promote ecosystem health and reduce excessive forest fuels. Burn plans are written and executed with specific objectives in mind, such as fuel reduction or wildlife habitat improvement. If a prescribed fire demonstrates behavior that contradicts resource management objectives, suppression actions are taken.
- **Wildland Fires Managed for Resource Benefit** – these lightning-caused fires are allowed to burn within an identified, undeveloped management area. They are monitored and evaluated according to a predetermined schedule that is revalidated on a daily basis. Suppression actions are taken if these fires demonstrate behavior that contradicts resource management objectives or if the fire approaches its predetermined boundary.
- **Mechanical Fuel Reduction** – Federal agencies have been given clear direction by the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to mitigate the threat of wildland fires in the wildland-urban interface, where homes and other structures are directly adjacent to forests. **Mechanical fuel reduction projects will occur only in communities that have been pre-identified as threatened by fire.** Vegetation will be reduced in these areas according to specified standards, to be determined by an interdisciplinary team of subject matter experts. Combustible materials will be disposed of by burning when snow or rain is present, chipping or property transfer.

These actions are in accordance with the park's General Management Plan, Resource Management Plan and Fire Management Plan, which call for fire to be restored to the park's ecosystems to reduce excess fuels and promote forest health. They are also consistent with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, which guides fire management activity on all Federal lands. Planning for these actions will provide for firefighter and public safety, address important

values to be protected, be consistent with resource management objectives, and comply with environmental laws and regulations.

Pre-park grazing and selective harvest of timber, combined with a century of fire suppression, have led to unhealthy and overcrowded forest conditions at Grand Canyon National Park. These conditions increase the potential for unwanted and out-of-control wildland fires that place communities, resources and the public at risk. While the destructive potential of fire is evident, it is likewise recognized as an essential part of healthy ecosystems. Fire managers seek to strike a balance between suppressing fires that threaten lives or property, and allowing fire to be used as a tool to promote forest health.

To evaluate alternatives and determine environmental consequences, the National Park Service will be preparing an environmental assessment for these projects and would like to hear your comments and concerns related to the proposed actions. The park welcomes your participation in understanding these management actions and developing alternative actions. Issues identified to date include effects to air quality, soil, vegetation, wildlife – including threatened and endangered species, cultural resources and visitor experience.

Please send your comments to: Superintendent, c/o Sara White, Grand Canyon National Park, PO Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ, 86023. Or, send an e-mail reply to: [Sara\\_White@nps.gov](mailto:Sara_White@nps.gov).

Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. We would appreciate receiving your comments no later than **July 1, 2001**. If you have any questions regarding the projects, please call Kim Van Hemelryck at 520-638-7821.

Sincerely,

Joseph F. Alston  
Superintendent